

**BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

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| In the Matter of |) | |
| |) | |
| Telecommunications Relay Services |) | CC Docket No. 98-67 |
| And Speech-to-Speech Services for |) | |
| Individuals with Hearing and Speech |) | CG Docket No. 03-123 |
| Disabilities |) | |

To: Secretary, FCC
For: Chief, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

REPLY COMMENTS OF HAMILTON RELAY, INC.

Hamilton Relay, Inc. ("Hamilton") hereby submits its reply comments in response to the Commission's November 30, 2004 *Public Notice* regarding the possible application of a speed of answer requirement for Video Relay Service ("VRS").¹

Hamilton has been providing VRS since 2003. As the provider of a competitive service such as VRS, Hamilton has every incentive to ensure that its customers are satisfied and that calls are answered quickly and competently. Although VRS is still in its infancy and remains a voluntary TRS offering, Hamilton welcomes the opportunity to address the important issue of whether to require a minimum VRS answer speed time and if so, what that minimum time should be.

Hamilton joins commenters in agreeing that, as the VRS industry matures, a speed of answer requirement is appropriate for VRS. However, as set forth below, Hamilton submits that the record developed in this proceeding lacks sufficient data to determine the appropriate speed of answer time for VRS. Hamilton anticipates that once sufficient data is collected and analyzed, the Commission will be better prepared to determine a speed of answer time that is acceptable to

¹ *Federal Communications Commission Seeks Additional Comment on the Speed of Answer Requirement for Video Relay Service (VRS)*, Public Notice, DA 05-339 (rel. Feb. 8, 2005).

VRS users and providers alike. Hamilton would welcome the opportunity to submit data necessary for this purpose and to assist in its analysis.

A major concern expressed by many of the earlier comments relates to the shortage of qualified interpreters to fill both the need within VRS as well as the general needs of the community. The National Association of the Deaf (“NAD”) recently formed an ad hoc committee to address the impact of VRS on the deaf and interpreting communities.² NAD specifically cited the “very serious shortage of interpreters available for work in the community” due to the growing popularity of VRS. The ad hoc committee will “research and develop an extensive report on VRS and the interpreting community to determine the impact of VRS on the provision of interpreting services to deaf and hard of hearing consumers and to recommend strategies on how to address this national crisis.”³

NAD has highlighted one of the most fundamental reasons for the current speed of answer problem — that there is an overall shortage of qualified interpreters to meet the staffing needs of VRS providers. Hamilton believes that the findings of NAD’s ad hoc committee will be an important contribution and may contribute to forming the basis for a speed of answer requirement that can be implemented successfully.

In addition, the Commission has recognized that further data on answer speed must be collected. The Commission has specifically tasked the TRS Fund Administrator with collecting such information, and data has been collected for several months now. However, more time and data are needed in order to develop a sufficient record.

² <http://www.nad.org/site/pp.asp?c=foINKQMBF&b=390765> (visited Mar. 4, 2005).

³ *Id.*

To assist in the collection and analysis of answer speed data, Hamilton proposes that the Commission create a VRS advisory committee pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (“FACA”).⁴ Such a committee would serve as the expert group on speed of answer and other VRS issues. An advisory committee would be in an ideal position to analyze data that is being collected by the TRS Fund Administrator and to propose workable solutions to the speed of answer issue. Hamilton would welcome the opportunity to assist the efforts of a committee formulated for such purposes.

Respectfully submitted,

HAMILTON RELAY, INC.

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⁴ Public Law 92-463, 5 U.S.C., App 1.